



COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

July 2023 Report to the Connecticut General Assembly’s Public Health and Appropriations Committees and to the Office of Policy and Management

Commission Activities January 1 – June 30

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Data

Data Gallery and Report

The Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH) produced a [data gallery](#) visually presenting key inequities in health outcomes and social drivers of health. Hartford-based artist, [Lindaluz Carrillo](#), created the posters which were on display in the Legislative Office Building (LOB) concourse from May 16th-31st. In collaboration with the University of Connecticut Health Disparities Institute (HDI), CREPH hosted a reception in the LOB on May 17th which featured remarks by Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin (Executive Director, CREPH), Ayesha Clarke (Commission co-chair of CREPH and Executive Director of Health Equity Solutions), and Dr. Linda Barry (Interim Director, HDI and Associate Professor and Interim Associate Dean of the Office of Multicultural and Community Affairs, UConn School of Medicine).

To coincide with the event, CREPH released the [data report](#) entitled "*Understanding Racial Inequities Through Data*" and made digital and hard copies available to attendees. The report provides a deeper insight into the impact of racial inequities on public health and can be accessed on the CREPH website, alongside a digital copy of the data gallery posters. The report includes demographic, health outcome, economic security, education, and criminal justice involvement data requested by the CGA and Commission Members.

Criminal Justice Data

The Commission requested and received additional criminal justice involvement data from the Department of Correction. These data were added to the report in June of 2023, and are in the Appendix of the publicly posted copy.

The Commission worked with the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch to obtain the remainder of the criminal justice involvement measures recommended for inclusion in the report by the Commission Members and Undersecretary Marc Pelka. These data include the number of arrests and population on probation for both adults and juveniles, the adult population on post-release supervision, and the juvenile population receiving residential services. The Commission staff are cleaning the data and expect to release it by October of 2023.

Structural Racism Report

CREPH is completing a structural racism report with recommendations on how to reduce race-based inequities in state government pursuant to C.G.S. § 19a-133c. The report will offer practical steps to address structural racism sourced from practices currently being implemented in the federal government, Oregon, and within certain Connecticut government agencies.

The Commission expects to release the report by the end of the calendar year. This report will be publicly posted on the Commission [reports page](#).

Community Engagement

The Commission established a group of Community Engagement Advisors consisting of Commission co-chair Ayesha Clarke (Health Equity Solutions), Chavon Hamilton-Burgess (Harford Health Initiative, Inc.), Tammy Hendricks (Access Health CT), and Leonard Jahad (Connecticut Violence Intervention Program).

The Commission held the first meeting of Community Engagement Advisors on May 25th. At the meeting, the group discussed strategies to engage disproportionately impacted communities and residents of color. The goal of this subcommittee is to assist in creating a feedback loop which will inform future community engagement, strategic planning, and commission work.

The Commission is in the process of developing a Request for Proposals (RFP) to identify a contractor to assist with the Commission's community engagement and reporting activities (see above), as well as the strategic plan (see below). While the RFP process is under way, the commission is working with the Community Engagement Advisors to design a survey instrument which will be distributed with the assistance of Access Health CT. The Community Engagement Advisors second meeting was held on June 29th. Together, the group discussed and edited a staff-drafted survey instrument, aimed at providing insight into the needs, key concerns, and solutions relating to the standards of living and barriers to a healthy life. The survey will serve as a source of preliminary data and inform future community engagement.

Strategic Plan

The Commission is in the process of drafting a request for proposals to hire a consultant to assist with the creation of the strategic plan and community engagement data collection and reporting. Through the data gathering process, the strategic plan intends to offer research-based solutions envisioned by academics, thought leaders, and policy makers. Divided by policy areas, the consultant will facilitate focus groups from the local community, state agencies, and policy leaders on recommendations to reduce the impact of racism on public health outcomes in Connecticut.

Amendments to the C.G.S. Regarding CREPH

In the 2023 Legislative Session, the statutes regarding the Commission were amended through sections 188-190 of [Public Act 23-204](#). These changes¹ include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Redesignation of the commission membership to an advisory body.
2. Reduction of the membership from 28 to 15.
3. Removal of the names of organizations from the previous statute to replace them with organization descriptions and qualifications.
4. Provision of new appointee qualifications listed below:
 - a. A representative of a nonprofit organization that focuses on health policy and racial equity;

¹ [Bill Analysis for HB-6941](#) §§ 197-199 — COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH.
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/2023/BA/PDF/2023HB-06941-R01-BA.PDF#page=119>

- b. a representative of a nonprofit that focuses on racial equity and community engagement;
 - c. an expert in immigration policy and law;
 - d. a representative of a violence intervention program using a health-based approach to examine individuals' post-incarceration and policies for integration;
 - e. an expert in health disparities affiliated with an academic research institution;
 - f. a representative of a philanthropic entity that focuses on racial equity;
 - g. a biostatistician or epidemiologist with knowledge of the effects of social-structural factors on health;
 - h. a representative of a nonpartisan criminal justice policy and research entity;
 - i. a representative of a nonprofit that focuses on equitable housing policy;
 - j. a medical professional with expertise in diversity, equity, and inclusion policy;
 - k. an expert in environmental impacts on human health affiliated with an academic institution;
 - l. a representative of a nonprofit that focuses on economic research and policy;
 - m. a public health educator or researcher affiliated with an academic institution;
 - n. a current or former educator, school counselor, or school nurse with public policy experience; and
 - o. an education policy researcher affiliated with an academic research institution
5. Replaces the Office of Policy and Management co-chair role with an expert in health disparities from academia.

Involvement with State Committees, Boards, and Summits

Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee (OSAC)

The Executive Director sits on the [Opioid Settlement Advisory Committee \(OSAC\)](#) and its research/data subcommittee. OSAC was established in 2022, in accordance with C.G.S. § 17a-674d, to ensure the proceeds received by the state from the opioid litigation settlement agreements are allocated appropriately towards substance use disorder abatement.

Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board

The Executive Director sits on the [Tobacco and Health Trust Fund Board](#), established in accordance with C.G.S. § 4-28f to "create a continuing significant source of funds to (1) support and encourage development of programs to reduce tobacco abuse through prevention, education and cessation programs, (2) support and encourage development of programs to reduce substance abuse, and (3) develop and implement programs to meet the unmet physical and mental health needs in the state."

Office of the State Comptroller Healthcare Summits

The Executive Director has participated in the Comptroller's Healthcare Summits on urban and rural health experiences and obstacles faced by Connecticut residents. The summits, held in New Haven and Storrs, respectively, brought together thought leaders, elected officials, policy makers, and providers.

Presentations to Stakeholders

Throughout the first six months of 2023, the Executive Director presented to groups such as the State's Equity Affinity Group, the Racial/Ethnic and Language Standards Implementation State Agency Convening, the Department of Children and Families Racial Justice Working Group, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities' (CHRO) Kids Court Academy, and the Department of Public Health's summer internship cohort. In these presentations, the Executive Director presented on the purpose of the Commission and findings from the inequity data report. The Executive Director has also attended and participated in these meetings as appropriate.

Commission Meetings

February 27, 2023 – Regular Meeting

The Commission held an in-person business meeting where a draft of the bylaws was discussed. The Commission agreed to incorporate feedback from the commission membership into a second draft of the bylaws. The Commission also heard a presentation from Karen Siegel, Policy Director of Health Equity Solutions, where she discussed the organization's "*Path to Equity*" guide.

Meeting [minutes](#) are publicly posted on the CREPH website.

April 24, 2023 – Regular Meeting

The Commission held a virtual meeting where a second draft of the bylaws were voted on and approved. The Commission heard a presentation from Commission co-chair Gualtieri and Heather Ferguson-Hull, both from the Office of Policy and Management, where they provided an overview of key equity provisions from the Governor's proposed budget. The Executive Director provided updates of the data and structural racism reports and discussed the plan of hosting a Disparity Data Report Gallery and Reception. The Executive Director also discussed Summer 2023 Commission objectives which include community engagement and strategic planning.

Meeting minutes will be available on the CREPH website once approved by the advisory body.

Bylaws

In accordance with C.G.S. § 19a-133(i)(6), Commission staff drafted bylaws which were put to the Commission body for review and adoption. The bylaws provide a clear governance structure, outline duties and responsibilities of the Commission, and detail the membership and operations surrounding our work. The bylaws were adopted at the April meeting but will need to be reviewed and modified to reflect the changes made this session by PA 23-204. The bylaws will be available on the CREPH website once adopted by the advisory body.

Upcoming Commission Meetings

Regular Commission meetings are scheduled from 12:30 – 1:30 on the fourth Monday of even numbered months.

Remaining 2023 meeting dates:

- August 28th
- October 23rd
- December 18th* (*moved earlier due to the holidays*)